



The Project YES! Volunteer

Upcoming Dates

- 1/18: MLK Literacy Fair
- 3/1: Pulaski Day Bazaar
- 4/24: Global Youth Service Day

Mark Your Calendar!

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Project YES! Welcomes New Corps

Gillian Fealy

On September 9, seventeen determined and excited new AmeriCorps members embarked on their year of service with Project YES!. From the first orientation activity, it quickly became apparent that the group consisted of an impressive array of backgrounds and talents: from a trapeze artist, to a bike shop owner, to a winner of a taco-eating contest.

Orientation aimed at developing skills for the year of service ahead, including trainings on tutoring, learning disabilities, service project development, and diversity, welcoming guest speakers from the Settlement family, as well as community organizations in Chicago.

Members experienced their first opportunity to serve by

spending a day cleaning and gardening at the Harold Washington Garden in the Humboldt Park neighborhood. The spirit of serving the community continued with a trip to The House in the Wood, a Wisconsin camp serving the urban youth of Chicago. Here the members prepared the grounds for winter, spending two days cleaning, caulking, painting, and building rain gardens.

Throughout orientation, members had the opportunity to tour and learn about each of this year's six sites, in an effort to determine where each member would be the greatest asset. Much to the surprise and excitement of the members, site assignments were revealed on the final

night at The House in the Wood, through the use of a "sorting sombrero." Site team relationships quickly formed.

In the first week of October, members were off to their sites, taking with them the individual skills with which they came to Project YES!, as well as the new experiences they obtained during orientation, as they developed into the 2009-2010 Project YES! team.



National Service Recognition Day 2009

Carl Hay

On October 15, volunteers across the state boarded buses to attend National Service Recognition Day in Springfield, IL. Project YES! was among the 58 groups to attend the annual event, which offered an opportunity to learn about the diverse projects AmeriCorps members across the state are undertaking. The day included a welcome from Ted Gibbs, Executive Director of the Serve Illinois Commission, as well as a keynote speech by Richard Santana, AKA Señor Chocolate.

Santana presented himself as a "tough-talking Latino gangster," only to reveal at the end of his speech that he was actually Richard Santana, Harvard graduate. The speech encouraged AmeriCorps members to think about perceptions, lead by example, and make positive choices in their lives. The day culminated in a parade to the Capital Building where all AmeriCorps members took the Oath of Service and listened to a rousing speech by longtime Chicago broadcaster Merri Dee. National Service Rec-

ognition Day played an important role for Project YES! members: to exhibit the great national movement of volunteerism and service that Project YES! is a part of. People of all backgrounds, ages, and interests are working to solve the important issues that face our communities every day. National Service Recognition Day was proof that the American spirit of volunteerism and service is thriving and things are getting done in communities across the United States.

Making a Difference in West Town

On October 24, nearly 100 youth and adult volunteers devoted their time to helping neighbors in the West Town community for the 18th annual Make a Difference Day National Day of Service. In a variety of different projects, volunteers truly embraced the idea of neighbors helping neighbors.

Joining millions of other volunteers nationwide, Project YES! created service projects focusing on the neighborhood of the Northwestern Settlement. After a delicious breakfast donated by various local businesses, the volunteers

were energized and ready to make a difference!

Noble Street students from several campuses channeled their energy into an Eckhart Park cleanup, raking leaves, picking up litter in the park, and making Thanksgiving decorations for the park community

building. Meanwhile, other volunteers worked on painting the main lobby of Evanston Hall in the Settlement. Lastly, creative energy was channeled into preparations for the Enchanted Forest and Halloween games, a safe alternative to Halloween trick or treating for local

children.

We were happy to host volunteers from other Chicago AmeriCorps programs, including Project MORE and Jumpstart Roosevelt.

Overall, the day was truly a success, solidifying bonds between volunteers and the community. Margaret Mead's words rang true for Make a Difference Day 2009: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."



Volunteers eagerly support West Town through service on Make a Difference Day



Save the Date!

Martin Luther King Jr. Day is Monday, January 18.

We're hosting our 3rd annual Literacy Fair!

Email mmoran@nush.org for more information.



United We Serve: 9/11 National Day of Service

Micaela Moran

President Obama declared September 11, 2009, National Day of Service and Remembrance, as "an opportunity to salute the heroes of 9/11, recapture the spirit of unity and compassion that inspired our nation following the attacks, and rededicate ourselves to sustained service to our communities."

Project YES! recognized the National Day of Service by volunteering at Harold Washington Community Garden in Chicago's Hum-

boldt Park neighborhood. Amy Olson, a volunteer garden leader at Harold Washington, facilitated the project and informed members about community gardens and their impact on the local community.

Project YES! has partnered with Harold Washington and other local community gardens on past service projects, and this event further strengthened the relationship between the efforts.

Projects in the garden included turning compost, weeding, planting, harvesting vegetables, and picking up litter. After serving in the garden, members served themselves a delicious potluck lunch. It was a beautiful day and a wonderful opportunity to volunteer at a garden that serves the community.

Learn more about community volunteer opportunities at www.serve.gov.



Members learned new skills through the project, such as maintaining a compost system.

Helping Against Hunger at the GCFD

Esther Lindström

In recognition of September as National Hunger Awareness month, Project YES! members volunteered at the Greater Chicago Food Depository during orientation.

Having previously volunteered in the Settlement's Emergency Services, members were able to see the supplying agency. Also vol-

unteering were corporate employees participating in their "Orange Day" of service.

Project YES! members learned more about hunger in Chicago, especially in regards to education. The group packed weekend lunch bags for CPS students who rely on their schools for healthy food

options throughout the week. The Nourish for Knowledge program benefits about 2400 students in 16 community schools in Chicago.

Members enjoyed team-building and serving the community at the Greater Chicago Food Depository.



Members enjoyed packing food items into weekend bags for CPS students.

The Enchanted Forest

Nathan Hopkins

This past Halloween, the top two floors of the Settlement House were filled with nearly 250 superheroes, princesses, ghosts, and a vast array of other remarkable characters.

The motley crew filled Burnside Hall to play some Halloween-themed games planned by AmeriCorps Project 'YES!' team members. The children made candy-necklaces, ran relay races, and dug through piles of hay as part of the "needle-in-a-haystack" game, all the time filling their trick-or-



treat bags with plenty of Halloween candy.

Upstairs, Vittum Theater was transformed into an "Enchanted Forest." Children were greeted by a giant talking rabbit who led them through the forest in search of the magic dragon. Along the

Whimsical creatures and characters inhabited the Enchanted Forest, contributing to an overall magical atmosphere.

way, the children met wizards and trolls and got to lend a hand in crafts that would further enchant the magical forest.

Older kids also got to enjoy a scarier haunted house, organized and performed by 25 Noble Street College Prep students.

Participants were led by elevator down into Noble Street's darkened boxing gym, frightened by ghouls, and made witness to fiendish sights.

A total of 245 children and one hundred and 75 adults came to the Halloween Party, which provides a fun, safe, and family-friendly Halloween for neighbors in the West Town community. It couldn't have happened without the help of 80 volunteers: Noble Street students, AmeriCorps members, Settlement staff, and friends of the Settlement.

Alumni Spotlight: Erica Lee ('06- '07)

After her year of service with Project YES!, Erica Lee was inspired to pursue her master's degree in social work from the University of Chicago.

Having graduated this spring, Erica is presently the Coordinator for Women's Health at Korean Community Services—Public Health and Research Center in New York City.

As a member of Project YES!, Erica

gained her first experiences in a nonprofit organization directly serving the community. She credits her interest in social work to the support, partnership, and inspiration provided by Belna, Linda, and others at the Settlement.

Erica plans to continue developing skills in the health field, participating in research on health disparities in the U.S. and abroad as a longer term goal.



Project YES! alum Erica Lee (far right) organizes a press conference on breast cancer in New York, October 2009.



AmeriCorps Project YES!: Getting Things Done in Chicago

PROJECT YES! connects caring adults with youth in and around the West Town community through mentorship, educational, service, artistic, and recreational activities in order to support their academic achievement, provide them with positive alternatives to destructive behaviors, and foster an ethic of service in the entire community.

AmeriCorps Project YES!
Northwestern Settlement
1400 W. Augusta Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60642

Phone: 773-278-7471
Fax: 773-278-2621

E-mail: yrodriguez@nush.org
Web: <http://www.nush.org>



From left, Members to Remember Mandy Hahn-Ketter (October), Erin Schmidt (October), and Carl Hay (September).

Thanks for representing our program well!

Members to Remember

Teamwork:

Carl Hay

Carl was nominated by his peers for his compassion in assisting a fellow member who had car trouble during our annual trip to the Settlement's House in the Wood Camp in Delavan, Wisconsin.

Carl used his resources to go out of his way to support his teammate in a challenging situation, and his kindness was admired by the team.

Flexibility:

Mandy Hahn-Ketter

Project YES! members recognized Mandy in October for her leadership during planning for Make a Difference Day and the Halloween Enchanted Castle Event.

Mandy effectively delegated volunteers and helped to create enjoyable events for the West Town community. In addition, says one member, "Mandy always maintained a positive attitude, and encouraged everyone else to be positive."

Leadership:

Erin Schmidt

Erin also showed strength in October as she led the Volunteer Committee for our Make a Difference Day project.

Erin persevered, spending long days posting flyers and making community connections. Erin handled the pressure with a positive attitude, her fellow committee members calling her "a pleasure to work with!"

We're proud that all of our members are making a positive impact with each other and the community.



OPENING DOORS OF OPPORTUNITY